

Record Crowd Hears Rippy and Klusman Discuss Charter

Final Rounds Fired In Verbal Battle Over Merits of Proposed Civic Document

One of the largest crowds ever assembled in Torrance heard the debate between Charles T. Rippy, chairman of the board of freeholders, and William T. Klusman, opponent of the proposed city charter, at the Torrance high school auditorium Tuesday evening. The entire seating capacity of the hall was taken, and late comers who were unable to get inside listened to the speeches by means of a loud speaker system installed through the courtesy of the DeBra Radio Co.

Arrangements were made by this newspaper to present the debate in full, so that all those who were unable to attend might read the remarks of the participants, and the text of the debate follows:

After introductory speech by Mr. Klusman as to length of time each would speak, he continues:

You know, this is about the charter, the proposed charter. Now the people will be present and you can see and a decision will not be made until April 11, and you had better do some talk thinking and all studying. Listen carefully to what each side has to say. Mr. Rippy speaks in the affirmative and will try to convince you and I speak in the negative and I believe that I am able to convince you, but that is for you to decide.

The debate on the charter is unrestricted. That is, you know the charter is founded not alone just for the moment, but for all time to come. It is founded on the present government that we have had for 12 years. Everything in this town connects with the charter—with the proposed charter as well as with the present government and, therefore, it is unrestricted. Because our schools, our commercial, educational—that is the schools—all business, commercial, judicial and even social affairs are regulated by the statutes of government and, therefore, the charter connects with everything that is in Torrance in the past and the future. Therefore, Mr. Rippy or myself have the unrestricted privilege to discuss upon any subject pertaining to the charter in general, past or present. I am sure that you will all be good listeners and I thank you.

MR. RIPPY: Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: The charter is a proper subject for discussion before such an audience as this. It will be up to the people to decide whether or not this charter shall be adopted. I am satisfied that each one of you here will give this debate your earnest and conscientious consideration. It is a matter which some people deem unnecessary, but I think after you have heard the debate on both sides that you will agree it is a matter to which you must give your most earnest consideration.

The Board of Freeholders who drafted the charter were elected by the voters in the city of Torrance and it is only fitting that the public should be fully informed with reference to all facts and that is the object that we had in mind when this debate was arranged. It is absolutely imperative that the public be informed and, apparently, up to this time haven't been and that was the object of this debate. What I want to do, if possible, is to try to get you to consider the matter in an open-minded way, and erase from your mind the previous conceptions of the charter and consider the facts and the reasons that we give you, and try to verify the statements we make. And after giving our statements that proper consideration, you can go to the polls and vote as you see fit.

This charter, when you look at it has very few fundamental principles involved. The rest of the matters are mostly incidental or routine. This charter, as I said, was drawn by 15 freeholders who were elected by the people of Torrance about nine months ago. At that time we were given six months in which to prepare the charter and we took the entire six months. We examined from 75 to 100 charters before the charter was drawn up and proposed for your consideration. The charter was drawn by Chas. T. Rippy, R. J. Deininger, Sarah Caroline Collins, C. Earl Conner, J. S. Lancaster, Fay L. Parks, James W. Post, George Peckham, Frank R. Leonard, Scott R. Ludlow, Carl L. Hyde, C. M. Howard, Herbert S. Wood, Guy Mowry and W. Rufus Page. Eureka, Fremont, Hollister, Livermore, Martinez, Marysville, Menlo Park, Modesto, Monterey, Napa, Nayada, City, Pasadena, Palo Alto, Petaluma, Redwood City, Richmond, Sacramento, San Francisco, Santa Rosa, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Rosa, Stockton, Watsonville, Wilmington, Visalia, Ukiah, Tehama, Yuba and others.

Now with reference to the charter, the only way that this can be presented to the public in such a way that you can understand it, is to compare the existing government with the government to be set up under the charter and also compare the existing condition with reference to the schools as they exist today and then compare the condition that will exist under the charter. The charter can be really divided into three parts—the government, certain financial and tax provisions and the schools.

With reference to the type of government set up under the charter: As you know, we have a city council and, as far as the powers of this city council are concerned, its powers are plenary—they have absolute authority. They control not only the legislative department of this city, but every department of this city is controlled by the city council. The city council is what Bill is willing to call the dictator and as he claims the mayor is under the city charter. The city council under the present type of government has absolute control in other words, you have a body as existing today that controls every department of your government and you know that that type of government could not exist in a large city because the concentration of power in one body leads to corruption in office. Sooner or later you are going to have some trouble with your government. We had that situation in mind in drafting the charter—we don't expect to remain a city of six or seven thousand people.

Here is the fundamental principle of the charter: At the present time, the City of Torrance is a city of the sixth class. That means that the state legislature that meets in Sacramento about four or five hundred miles from here who know nothing about our conditions, makes all the laws that affect the City of Torrance. The result is that we never know where we are going to stand. If we become a city under this charter, if you want to know where your powers are, look at your charter. We control our own municipal affairs and we have outlined in this charter. The state laws of California will have no bearing on the City of Torrance except with reference to state affairs. So, as far as municipal affairs are concerned, we are absolutely independent of the state legislature.

Here is the next principle: At the present time, you have a city council that absolutely controls every department in the city. We have divided the powers of the city into three parts. The city council hereafter makes all the laws. The mayor acts independently of the city council and will have only executive authority. And the police court exercises the judicial power. We have three separate departments which under the charter are elected by the people. At the present time we have one body elected by the people—the city council. The mayor, the council and the court are elected by the people under the charter. All powers are definitely fixed and where one power ends the next one starts. It has been charged that the mayor's authority is that of a dictator. That seems to be the main charge against the charter. That, as a matter of fact, is not the fact at all. On page 18 of the charter you will find a list of special powers and duties of the city council and all must be exercised by the city council. They can only be exercised by legislative body. If the council decides that a certain thing can be done and then an ordinance is passed to that effect and the appropriation made, thereafter the mayor sees that the ordinance is carried out, he can only exercise supervisory authority. On page 18 of the charter are listed all of the powers of the city council which dictate your policy and not the mayor's.

Here is another important thing which doesn't exist under the present type of government. At the present time all members of your city council can be chosen from one street. Under the charter we have divided this city into five different districts. We have provided that one man is nominated from each district. And that the people that live in that district must nominate that man. The entire public vote on these nominations. You are getting direct representation on the city council which you do not have under the present government. They owe their representation to the entire public—quite different from the system they have now. Under the charter they must come from different localities, but their responsibility is to the public as a whole.

As to some of the financial provisions: It has been said that this charter has been drawn up at the instance of the large industries and the large land owners. They try to say that we have ignored the ordinary working man like you and I. This charter was not drawn at the behest of any individuals or particular individuals. It was drawn up in the interest of everybody that lives in Torrance. We have included a provision in this charter which, in the course of the present time is in the state law but can be repealed and can be changed at any time, that no assessment can be put on your property in excess of 50% of the true value of your lot. That

is not any one assessment, but the total assessments on your lots cannot exceed 50% of the total value of your lots. We also provide in the charter that if 50% of the people in any particular district protest any particular public improvement, that this protest is sufficient to cause the city council to abandon the proceeding. The provisions included which will include if not thousands of dollars is the matter of getting rights of way in opening streets. At present you have to file suit in court, have complaints printed and served, get appraisers appointed, employ attorneys, etc. It is provided in this charter that if you want to go out and open a street 50 feet wide you can get deed from the owners and avoid all condemnation proceedings. The deed contains a condition subsequent to the effect that if the purchase price is not paid in one year that the deed is void. This will enable you to secure all the deeds to the right of way without incurring any liability. We did not purchase price unless all the deeds are secured.

The charter also provides that the city must go on a cash basis. The importance of this can be readily seen. It saves you paying 6% for money borrowed. We have reduced the promotion tax from 10% to 5%, which, of course, means a reduction in your taxes. I think that covers the most important financial and tax provisions. Of course our present tax system is still continued in effect. Our taxes are still levied by the county tax collector and remitted to us.

Now, with reference to the schools: That is a situation which I don't think anyone understood in the beginning. We did not realize the actual condition that exists and I doubt if anyone else here realized what the condition really was. This is the question: Can we operate our schools to the same advantage as the city of Los Angeles? As you know, at the present time, we are part of the Los Angeles school district which means we are in the same situation as the city of Los Angeles. The Los Angeles school district, in the Los Angeles school district, the board of education in Los Angeles consists of five members; they have one superintendent and 10 assistant superintendents. That means that under the Los Angeles school system you have one superintendent for every 85 schools. There are 9584 teachers in the Los Angeles school system. Each assistant superintendent has charge of 950 teachers. He must supervise at least 38 schools; he must supervise 950 teachers. He is supposed to be in close contact with each school. It is a physical impossibility to properly supervise schools where there is only one superintendent to every 38 schools and each 950 teachers. Under ordinary conditions, you have one man supervising one school. There are 144 different school districts in Los Angeles county alone. The main thing is that there are a great number of school districts in Los Angeles county. I can point out any number of school districts, all of which are operating on a cost per pupil basis less than the Los Angeles school district.

The question has come up as to whether or not we can really secure the necessary teachers. It has been charged that the teachers in Torrance will quit. We get some more teachers to take their places? In order to find out, I circulated all small districts in Los Angeles county. (Here Mr. Rippy read a number of letters from Azusa, El Monte, Beverly Hills, Temple City, Montebello.) On the question of whether or not the Los Angeles school district has additional advantages second to none—(Mr. Rippy reads letter from Azusa.) Beverly Hills has one of the finest large city systems in California and perhaps in the United States. Here is the significant part of the statement from Beverly Hills: "Systems may be done so large, however, that they become unwieldy and perhaps too impersonal. The size of the system does not necessarily determine its value to the community." (Mr. Rippy reads letters from Temple City and Hermosa Beach.) The contention has also been made that the Los Angeles school district can get you specialized departments. (Reads letter from Clearwater.) Stresses this important point: "With the assessed valuation that you have in Torrance you will be able to set up and maintain a school system of your own at most less cost." (Letters read from Monrovia, Beverly Hills and Azusa.)

Another point on the financial side of it. The City of Torrance became a part of the Los Angeles school district about 1914. At that time the Los Angeles school district had issued—prior to that time and up to that time—\$4,600,000 in bonds. As soon as we became a part of that district we began paying our pro rata share of those bonds since 1914 and have been paying about 18 years. There is no reason why we should continue to pay on those bonds. If we stay in the Los Angeles school district we will have to continue to pay our part. These figures are hard to remember. We have been paying on bonds that were voted before we became a part of the Los Angeles school district. The amount of the outstanding bonds on June 30, 1931, was about \$58,845,000. In 1931, \$12,720,000 were voted by the Los Angeles school district. Last night the Los Angeles school board authorized the issuance of another \$1,400,000. Prior to that night \$1,999,000 had been issued, so that \$999,000 has been issued in Torrance. Those bonds have been authorized. We are bonded today to the extent of over \$700,000 although

we don't know it... \$68,000 is the total cost of building in Torrance. We have been paying on bonds for over 18 years and yet we are bonded over \$700,000 at the present time. On June 30, 1931, the Los Angeles school district had a sinking fund of over \$1,000,000. If we become a separate school district at the right time, \$41,000 in bonds will be credited on our bonds. We can cut our bonds by \$11,000. We can save money on our bonds by being a separate school district. We do not have to bond ourselves again to buy the schools in the City of Torrance. (See 156 Calif. Pass School District against Hollywood School District.) If there is any question as to whether or not we have to assume the amount that is due on our buildings here in Torrance, see Sec. 273 the school code. We do not have to vote any bonds to buy the schools; all we have to do is to assume the balance due on the bonds.

The reason I say that we can operate our schools cheaper than the Los Angeles school district is that we have chosen the school and I know. Montebello has a rate of \$1.24 and our rate is \$1.62. Both of those rates include 45.4 cents which we have to pay to the county. Every district in Los Angeles county pays exactly the same rate to the county. The Torrance high school district rate is \$1.62. Montebello is \$1.24, and here is where the difference comes in. Montebello is a district somewhat similar to Torrance. Montebello has a small residential area, large outlying territory and large industries. The main reason they can operate their schools so cheaply is that they have a large industrial area. Montebello has practically the same situation as Torrance. They have almost the same assessed valuation. In our Los Angeles district proper we have 1700 pupils and they have 5500 pupils altogether. We have 600 teachers and they have 120. Yet they operate at \$1.24. If it has been contended that they receive more from the county than we do, they get the same proportion from the county and state that we get. Our income is proportionately the same. The assessed valuation of your buildings is going down about 20%; the assessed valuation on land will probably go down 10%. Your assessed value is going down in the Los Angeles school district. Your rate is going up. It is bound to. If Los Angeles county does not cut its overhead, that rate is bound to go up next year. The largest part of their assessed valuation is land. If they don't cut their overhead, our tax rate will go up 14 to 15%. If you cut teachers' salaries 20% and cut off half of our transportation in Torrance, you can save 10% of your transportation—if you cut that in two, you could operate about 38% less than the Los Angeles school district.

MR. KLUSMAN: Well, folks, you see what I am up against—a man who can speak; I can only talk. It is no use for me to go over Judge Rippy's figures. He has them down pat and you about the charter's other side. A member of the freeholders that refused to sign the charter made a statement in the Torrance Herald that there were compromises in the charter that were of a serious nature—of such a serious nature that they might invalidate the good things that were in the charter. Section 2, New Territory Part of Contiguous Councilmanic District. (Reads) Speaks: Any new territory that might be annexed to Torrance under the charter becomes part of that district adjacent thereto and the city council under that charter do not have to readjust the city in 10 years. In other words, if Lomita should annex to Torrance it becomes part of the district adjacent thereto and so for 10 years that district with Lomita included would only have one representative at the city council of Torrance against the other four.

(Reads Section 2, page 5 of the charter—Existing Ordinances, etc.) (Speaks) Momentary pending actions. There is something pending before the county officials in Los Angeles and that is the Palos Verdes parkway. Don't build that parkway in the Palos Verdes and Hollywood Riviera.

(Reads Section 4 and says: Look those sections up. If you are a poor man like I am, I hope to get elected this time. But that is up to you people, I only have one vote.) Reading from Sec. 8 on page 8—Each certificate must contain the name of one signer. It surprises me they didn't make 25 notary publics in the charter. If you elect the city trustees and one of them should turn out to be a rascal, you should turn out a time to get him out. Under the charter you can not put out, set out or circulate a petition to kick a rascal out of office. You have to draw them to the city hall and sign the petition there. Mr. Rippy has said that the supreme court has upheld it. I believe that is only a state supreme court. That is a matter of how the judges happen to feel about it.

Here is a thing for all my life, ever since I became of age, we have been fighting—to get government out of the hands of the people. I am for the people and I am for the people. We have a lot of money with about 10,000,000 men that haven't got a job and children going hungry and under-nourished. Railroads say they can't afford to haul anything anywhere—that they are going bankrupt—and hard times are felt pretty hard. Torrance has been the sting of the times and I know it. We have a lot of money with about 10,000,000 men that haven't got a job and children going hungry and under-nourished. Railroads say they can't afford to haul anything anywhere—that they are going bankrupt—and hard times are felt pretty hard. Torrance has been the sting of the times and I know it. We have a lot of money with about 10,000,000 men that haven't got a job and children going hungry and under-nourished. 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